NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6234 OCTOBER 31, 1978
LINDA CASHDAN

CAMPAIGN '78: WOMEN AND THE ELECTIONS

ANNCR:

MORE WOMEN ARE RUNNING FOR OFFICE IN THE UNITED STATES THIS YEAR THAN EVER BEFORE, BUT THEIR VICTORIES MAY HAVE GREATER SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE FUTURE THAN THE PRESENT. LINDA CASHDAN TAKES A LOOK AT WOMEN AND THE ELECTIONS:

VOICE:

THE "CHAIRPERSON" OF THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY IS A WOMAN. SO IS THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN EXPRESS INTERNATIONAL BANKING CORPORATION, AND ABOUT TWELVE OF THE VICE PRESIDENTS OF THE GIANT SECURITIES COMPANY, MERRILL, LYNCH, PIERCE, FENNER, AND SMITH. BUT THIS PATTERN OF FEMALE BREAKTHROUGHS THAT HAS OCCURRED AT THE TOP OF THE CORPORATE WORLD HAS NOT BEEN DUPLICATED IN POLITICS. THERE ARE ONLY TWENTY WOMEN IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TODAY, AND 515 MEN. THERE ARE NO WOMEN ON THE SUPREME COURT, AND THERE NEVER HAVE BEEN. ONLY TWO OF THE FIFTY STATES HAVE GOVERNORS WHO ARE WOMEN. ONLY ONE PER CENT OF ALL FEDERAL JUDGES ARE WOMEN.

WHAT'S MORE, WHEN THE ELECTION RESULTS ARE TALLIED (NEXT WEEK) (NOV. 7), THE POLITICAL PICTURE MAY LOOK WORSE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. THE TWO WOMEN PRESENTLY SERVING IN THE U.S. SENATE -- BOTH WIDOWS WHO TOOK OVER THEIR HUSBANDS' SEATS -- ARE RESIGNING, AND ALTHOUGH THERE ARE TWO WOMEN RUNNING FOR THE SENATE, NEITHER IS FAVORED TO WIN. IN THE HOUSE, THREE OF THE 18 INCUMBENT CONGRESSWOMEN ARE RETIRING. THREE OTHERS HAVE STIFF COMPETITION FOR RE-ELECTION. AND SO, DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF NEW AND PROMISING FEMALE CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES, THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN THE NEW CONGRESS MAY VERY WELL BE LOWER THAN THE PRESENT ONE.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN WOMEN ARE NOT MAKING PROGRESS IN POLITICS. IT JUST MEANS THE PROGRESS IS NOT HAPPENING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. YET.

THE REAL SUCCESS STORY IS BEING TOLD QUIETLY, IN THOUSANDS OF LOCAL, CITY-WIDE, AND STATE ELECTIONS AROUND THE UNITED STATES, WHERE WOMEN ARE RUNNING FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE IN LARGER NUMBERS AND WITH GREATER SUCCESS THAN EVER BEFORE. TWENTY PER CENT MORE WOMEN WERE NOMINATED BY MAJOR PARTIES FOR STATE-WIDE OFFICES THIS YEAR THAN IN 1974. AFTER NEXT TUESDAY'S ELECTION WOMEN ARE EXPECTED TO HOLD 10 PER CENT OF THE STATE LEGISLATIVE SEATS -- THE HIGHEST PROPORTION EVER. NINE WOMEN ARE CANDIDATES FOR STATE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR THIS YEAR, AND SIXTEEN ARE RUNNING FOR SECRETARY OF STATE. IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND, WOMEN ARE EXPECTED TO WIN FOUR OF MARYLAND'S EIGHT SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WHICH WOULD MAKE IT THE FIRST STATE DELEGATION WITH EQUAL MALE AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION.

NOT ONLY ARE MORE WOMEN RUNNING THIS YEAR, IT HAS BEEN BETTER ORGANIZED. A FEMINIST POLITICAL NETWORK HAS EMERGED OVER THE LAST EIGHT YEARS, A NETWORK WHICH BECOMES MORE SOPHISTICATED WITH EACH ELECTION. AND THIS YEAR, IT HAS BEEN ACTIVELY AIDING FEMALE POLITICIANS WITH BOTH TACTICAL ADVICE AND MONEY. TOGETHER THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS AND THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN FUND HAVE HANDED OUT MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS TO WOMEN CANDIDATES -- WITH GOOD RESULTS. MORE THAN TWO THIRDS OF THE RECIPIENTS WON IN THEIR PRIMARY ELECTIONS.

"WE BEGIN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THAT IS OUR STRATEGY," SAYS BETSY WRIGHT, THE DIRECTOR OF THE WOMEN'S EDUCATION FUND, ANOTHER ORGANIZATION INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN EFFORT.

"VOTERS HAVE TO GET ACCUSTOMED TO ELECTING WOMEN," SHE SAYS. "UNTIL VOTERS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO HAVING WOMEN AS POLICYMAKERS, THEY WILL NOT SEND WOMEN TO CONGRESS."

WHILE THE BIG CAMPAIGNS GET NATIONAL ATTENTION ON ELECTION NIGHT, THE WOMEN'S POLITICAL NETWORK WILL BE CAREFULLY WATCHING THE LITTLE CAMPAIGNS AROUND THE NATION. THESE ARE THE FINALS THAT WILL TELL THE WOMEN HOW WELL THEY HANDLED THINGS THIS YEAR -- AND GIVE THEM AN IDEA OF WHAT IS TO COME IN FUTURE ELECTIONS.

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